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Cougars Target Education

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(CTZ Public Affairs)

ZABUL, Afghanistan- Cougars from 2nd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment are devoting their limited free time while deployed to the pursuit of a very special target. No it isn't a key leader in the Taliban organization or even a large cache of weapons, this target is higher education. Many Troopers are using their downtime to attend college courses thanks to the development of the new education program at Forward Operating Base Apache and the encouragement of a supportive chain of command.

"Education plays a vital role in the development and progression of our Soldiers in the Army today," said 2nd Squadron's Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Martinez. "To be able to instill in each one of our Soldiers the desire to better themselves through the pursuit of knowledge, will not only make them better leaders, but will make us a better institution."

"It is our responsibilities, as leaders, to care enough to ensure our Soldiers have that vital opportunity to reach their full potential and to evolve into those future, small unit leaders who will carry the Army through this century and beyond," Martinez continued. "It has been an honor to serve in a command climate which pursues excellence, and the individual development of our Soldiers."

The Squadron developed a program that has allowed Soldiers to explore a myriad of educational opportunities. Overseeing the development of this program is the Squadron's education counselor, Spc. Julio Alicea-Robles. According to Robles, the program has already allowed Troopers to improve their GT scores as well as take College Level Examination Program tests and Defense Activities Non-Traditional

Education Support exams. Robles and several of his fellow Cougars have also tutored many through Functional Academic Skills Training classes. Many Soldiers have developed plans to accomplish their educational goals through one-on-one counseling sessions.

“We are currently offering Intro to Writing, Public Speaking and Government,” Robles said. “We currently have 31 students in writing; 27 in speech and 33 students in Government.” Each class is one hour and 45 minutes a day, Monday Through Saturday for four weeks. If a student cannot attend during that time due to mission requirements, they are allowed to complete the class work on their own. The current classes are being taught by Ms. Angela Grant, a representative from the University of Maryland. Grant said she is quite pleased with her students work so far and is really impressed with their desire to learn. “It makes me happy to see people who weren’t sure they could do it,” Grant said, “not only do it, but perform so well.”

“I have told them they are just as smart and capable as a freshman class at Harvard or anywhere else,” she said. The one thing Grant hopes her students take away from her classes is a sense of pride in their accomplishments. Command Sgt. Major Martinez is very pleased with the results he has seen



Showtime: A student reads her report during the Government class held at the chapel on Forward Operating Base Apache. (Photo by Sgt. Jerry Wilson)

from the program and urges all Soldiers to strive to reach their goals. “Here in Afghanistan, we have just opened the door. They have walked through it, sacrificed their valuable off time to reach the goals they have set for themselves,” Martinez continued. “I know all the leaders in our unit are very proud of them, and hope that they will continue throughout their lives to reach for excellence.”

Martinez went on to stress that it is important for all senior Noncommissioned officers or any Soldier in a leadership role to encourage and nurture their Soldier’s desire to strive for personal development. It is these well-rounded individuals that will become the leaders of tomorrow. 2nd Squadron’s dedication to this education program in a deployed environment is yet another testimony to the Regiment’s continued emphasis on self improvement.



School House: Ms. Angela Grant leads a discussion during the Government class held at Forward Operating Base Apache. (Photo by Sgt. Jerry Wilson)